DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 337 560 UD 028 325

AUTHOR Flynn, Timothy M.
TITLE The Role Behavioral Adjustment Plays in Placing Middle School Students "At Risk" of Academic Failure.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Academic Failure; *Adjustment (to Environment); *Behavior Problems; Behavior Rating Scales; Black Students; *High Risk Students; Intermediate Grades; Junior High School Students; *Middle Schools; Parents; Prediction; *Racial Differences; Secondary School Teachers; Student Evaluation; White Students
IDENTIFIERS United States (Southeast)

ABSTRACT

The role of behavioral adjustment in placing middle school students at risk academically is examined using 23 middle school teachers' and 378 parents' ratings of 389 children (53 percent blacks and 47 percent whites) on Conner's Parent Rating Scale and Conner's Teacher Rating Scale. The average rating on the scales for both sets of ratings is above the norms for the age group studied. The California Achievement Test-Total (CAT-T) for the children is below average as would be expected for a sample with a higher than average number of behavioral problems. A shared variance of 58% between the parents' and teachers' ratings indicates a large area of agreement. Both parents' and teachers' ratings on the scales predict a nearly identical amount of CAT-T variance (49 percent). A regression analysis using both teachers' and parents' ratings accounts for 54 percent of the CAT-T variance. The findings support the contention that the behavior problems evident in school are also evident in the home. Three data tables and a 13-item list of references are included. (Author/SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED382560

THE ROLE BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENT PLAYS IN PLACING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS "AT RISK" OF ACADEMIC FAILURE

Timothy M. Flynn, Associate Professor
Educational Leadership and Secondary Education
Fayetteville State University

Phone: 919-488-2570

Submitted To:

ERIC/TME
American Institute for Research
3333 K Street NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 10007

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Timothy M Flynn
Fayetteville State University

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

UD028325

ABSTRACT

The role behavioral adjustment plays in placing middle school students in academic risks was examined through 23 middle school teachers and 378 parents ratings of 389 children on the Conners' Parent and Teacher Rating Scales. The average rating on the Conners' Scales for both sets of ratings was above the Conners' norms for the age group studied. The California Achievement Test-Total (CAT-T) was below average as would be expected for a sample with a higher than average number of behavioral problems. A shared variance of 58 percent ($r = .76$) between the Parents and Teachers ratings indicate a large area of agreement. Both parents and teachers ratings on the Conners' Scales predicted a nearly identical amount of CAT-T variance (49 percent). A regression analysis using both teachers and parents ratings accounted for 54 percent of the CAT-T variance. These findings support the contention that the behavior problems evident in school are also evident in the home.

The Role Behavioral Adjustment Plays in Placing Middle School Students "At Risk" of Academic Failure

A wide variety of social, emotional and behavioral problems effect the middle school students academic achievement. The most frequently occurring problem in boys is hyperactivity with the estimates ranging from about 3 percent to as high as 20 percent of the middle school male population experiencing this difficulty (Wielkieweiz, 1988). Boys are three to ten times more likely to be labeled hyperactive than girls (Wielkieweiz, 1988). Excessive activity may diminish in middle and higher grades but difficulty in maintaining attention in school may continue.

There is agreement that impulsive behavior interferes with academic achievement and that hyperactive children tend to be more impulsive than the typical child. Another category of children experiencing problems with impulse control is the conduct problem child. The conduct problem child is rebellious, argumentative, makes derogatory remarks, threatens others and feels little remorse over their

actions (Hughes, 1988). If this over aggressiveness is not reduced by the time the child is in middle school it tends to remain a stable characteristic of the individual (Hughes, 1988). Antisocial, aggressive students usually are unpopular with their peers because they have earned this unpopularity. Occasionally they may have become antisocial because they were rejected by their peers (Magid and McKelvey, 1987). In either case antisocial behavior is usually associated with inadequate school achievement. Rutter, Tizard, and Whitmore (1970) found that one-fourth of slow middle school readers demonstrated antisocial behavior, while a third of all conduct-disordered middle school students had a reading disability.

A serious problem with middle school students is depression. Reynolds (1984) and his colleagues conducted epidemiologic studies with 8000 students in public and private schools and found 14 percent of children in grades 4 to 6 and 16 percent of those in grades above 6 were clinically depressed. Another 18 percent had borderline problems with depression. It is estimated that between three and six million children and adolescents in the United States suffer from

recognized or unrecognized depression (Reynolds, 1984). In addition to being socially withdrawn, depressed children are likely to have difficulty concentrating on schoolwork (Reynolds, 1984). Depressed middle school students do not gain self-esteem from academic success as they tend to attribute their successes to uncontrollable external factors instead of their own merit (Reynolds, 1984).

Not only the children classified as hyperactive, conduct problems, and depressed experience academic problems, but also those with borderline classifications of these three categories experience significant academic difficulties (Rutter, Tizard and Whitmore, 1970). Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Schell and Towle (1988), found that measures of such traits as attention span, high rates of motor activity and behavioral problems are found to predict school achievement better than cognitive skills. Non-compliance to request predicted scores on the Conner's Rating Scale for teachers and parents better than objective measures of activity. The non-compliant child is likely to have difficulty not only with adult and peer relations but also with academic achievement.

By far the most frequently employed rating scales used to measure the behavior of children are the Conner's Rating Scales for Teachers and for Parents (Conners, 1976). These scales were designed and continue to be used to determine if the child is hyperactive. However, both measures are concerned with a wide variety of behavioral and emotional characteristics including Conduct Disorders, Emotional-Overindulgent, Anxious-Passive, Asocial, and daydream/Attendance Problems (Trites, Blonin, and Laprade, 1982). Barkley's (1981) factor analysis of the scale found five general items clusters: (1) aggressive conduct, (2) day dreaming-inattention, (3) anxiety-fearfulness, (4) hyperactivity, and (5) sociability. Conners (1973) found the scales correctly identified 77 percent of neurotic children, 83 percent of normal children and 74 percent of hyperactive children from its factor scores.

The purpose of the present study is to determine the role behavior plays in the middle school students academic achievement and examine the relationship between Teachers and Parents behavior ratings in predicting achievement. The use of both the teacher's

and parent's forms of the Conners Scales will determine, through the use of multiple regression, if greater accuracy in predicting the middle schools students academic achievement is obtained through use of both forms. If greater accuracy is obtained it would justify obtaining both teacher's and parent's ratings in evaluating middle school students behavior. It also may provide some satisfaction to teachers that parents are experiencing the same behavior problems at home that is also causing concern at school.

PROCEDURE

The study was conducted in Southeastern United States with twenty-three teachers and 378 parents rating 389 children on Conners' Scales. Mothers completed the Conners' Parent Rating Scale - Revised (CPRS-R) (Goyette et al., 1978) except for eleven fathers who completed ratings because the mother was not available. The teachers were enrolled in a graduate education program and taught in six nearby school systems. The teachers rated their students on the Conners' Teacher Rating Scale - Revised (CTRS-R) (Goyette et al., 1978) and requested that the parents complete the parents form of the Conners' Scale. If a

parent rating was not obtained on the student, the teachers rating was not used. The data was collected over a period of two years.

The students rated were 46 percent male and 54 percent female. The average age was 12.83. Black students were 53 percent of the sample and white students were 47 percent of the sample.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the variables under study.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The average rating on the Conners' Scales for both the teachers and parents ratings were above the Conners' (1973) norms for the age group studied. The CAT total percentile also was below average. If there is a relationship between behavior problems and academic achievement it was expected a group with higher number of problems than average would have lower than average achievement level.

Table 2 presents the intercorrelations for the variables under study.

TABLE 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

VARIABLE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Sex	1.46	.50
Age	12.83	2.15
Race	1.47	.50
Teachers Ratings	20.03	4.07
Parent Ratings	18.37	3.59
CAT Percentile (TOTAL)	44.27	14.38

TABLE 2
INTERCORRELATIONS OF VARIABLES

	SEX	AGE	RACE	PARENTS-R	TEACHERS-R	CAT-T
Sex	1.00	0.18	0.01	-0.16	0.00	0.01
Age	0.18	1.00	-0.16	-0.26	-0.29*	0.27*
Race	0.01	-0.16	1.00	0.07	0.06	-0.22
Parents	-0.16	-0.26*	0.07	1.00	0.76*	-0.69*
Teachers	0.00	-0.29*	0.06	0.76*	1.00	-0.70*
CAT-T	0.01	0.27*	-0.22	-0.69*	-0.70*	1.00

NOTE n = 389 * $P \geq .01$

TABLE 3
REGRESSION RESULTS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS RATINGS IN PREDICTING ACHIEVEMENT

PREDICTOR	COEFFICIENT	R	B-WEIGHT	R^2
Parents-R	-1.4769		-.3684	
Teachers-R	-1.4685		-.4160	
Constant	100.8261			
R & R Square		.7369		.5430

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

The result presented in Table 2 support the finding previously presented that older children are more likely to have fewer problems than younger children. However, only a slight relationship existed for both parent and teacher measures between sex and behavior.

A shared variance of 58 percent between the Conners' Parents and Teachers' Ratings indicates a substantial amount of agreement between parents and teachers view of the difficulties a child is experiencing. Both parents and teachers ratings predicted a near identical amount of variance (49 percent) in their relationship to California Achievement Test total percentile. This finding supports previous research measures that attention span, high rates of motor activity and behavioral problems predict school achievement better than cognitive skills (Shaywitz, et. al., 1988).

To determine if the use of both teachers and parent ratings predicted additional variance, a

regression analysis was conducted using both teachers and parents ratings to predict the California Achievement Test total percentile. The results are presented in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

The use of both rating scales accounted for 54 percent shared variance while the use of either one of the rating scales accounted for 49 percent shared variance. The use of both scales added statistically significant ($p \geq .01$) amount of variance to the prediction of achievement. Thus despite the large shared variance (59 percent) between the teachers and parents ratings on the Conners' Scales the use of both measures did provide a meaningful improvement in prediction accuracy.

The present findings provides strong support for teacher's contention that behavioral and emotional behavior have a strong influence on the students academic achievement. It is important to note that this data was collected on intact classes with a wide range of achievement and adjustment levels. Much of

the previous research was conducted on children identified as hyperactive or disruptive in class who were compared to students not classified as having behavioral problems. The present findings indicate that middle school children who are experiencing borderline levels of problems are also being handicapped in their academic achievement.

The findings support the widespread belief that problems children have will be evident both at home and school. They also support the value of collecting data from parents. It appears from the present findings that parents observations are just as valid as teachers observations on the rating the behavior of middle school students.

It is expected that a middle school student having emotional or behavior problems will need some type of educational or classroom adjustment. Since exceptional education may not be an option for most of these students, regular education will have to accommodate them. One means of identifying and serving these students would be to use Children-At Risk (CAR) program recently developed by many states to deal with students expected to fail. This program is designed to reduce

the number of students at risk of failing within the academic and/or social domains by attempting to deal with problems that impair the student's ability to learn, and thus fail to make appropriate progress through school. The CAR process identifies a series of factors viewed as contributing to school failure and attempts to modify the educational program to best accommodate the child's needs. Certainly the children presenting such behavior problems as measured in the present study could be viewed as being at-risk for not being academically successful or even completing school.

The at-risk process is an appropriate first step in working with families and teachers of children with a behavioral program. While programs vary, each program is concerned with the identification of variables that contribute to the students lack of academic progress. These may include educational variables (e.g., achievement below grade or ability level expectations, displaying disruptive behavior in or outside the classroom setting, a number of unexcused absences, failing a certain number of subjects, having an exceptional education need, or being a school

dropout) and/or health/social variables (e.g., displaying ineffective or poor interpersonal skills, low self-esteem, dysfunctional family, being a victim of physical/sexual/emotional abuse, substance use, teenage parent, delinquency). The school system will have a referral form with these variables listed. Both parents and teachers complete the form. They meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss the student's unique needs and those issues requiring resolution. They will produce an education plan to deal with the problem in the education setting. The education plan may include alternative programs, support services, curriculum adjustment, methods of monitoring behavior, implementation of a home school behavior management program and referral for psychological or medical evaluation. The At-Risk process is a helpful and ongoing way to meet the needs of children with emotional and behavioral problems within the regular education setting. If implemented correctly, these will foster communication between professionals and parents and improve the child's academic performance.

Parents and teachers must have realistic academic goals and expectations for the middle school child with

emotional and behavioral problems. If their demands exceed the child's capacity to perform than the program is asking for disruptive behavior due to the stress of continued failure. If academic frustration occurs it would jeopardize the positive effect the education plan would have on the middle school students behavior. Thus, academic tutoring is essential to lessen the gap between the students performance and his potential. Should the middle school student meet standards for enrollment in a special education program, an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is then developed. It is the IEP that governs the method, type, and degree of intervention. Students enrolled within the special program are frequently in fairly structured academic program complete with a program for managing the students emotional and behavioral problems. There is evidence such procedures are both necessary and effective in assisting children with such problems (Barkley, 1989, McMahon and Wells, 1989).

Despite the fact that only a small percentage of students experiencing significant emotional and behavioral problems require special education, it is necessary that the classroom teachers understand basic

behavioral principles and practical management skills necessary to assist these students. Even if the student is in special education program, he is usually mainstreamed and the teacher will have the responsibility for providing the regular classroom instruction. The key for success in any program is assisting the emotional and behavioral troubled students is a partnership with the home. Whether the middle school employs token reinforcement, encouragement-reprimand, contingency contracting, or a home-school behavior management program it is important they be implemented only after a complete assessment and appropriate consultation with teachers and parents. Information from parents and teachers are vital to any program for assisting these children and it appears the Conners' Parent Rating Scale - Revised (CPRS-R) and the Conners' Teaching Rating Scale - Revised (CTRS-R) are an economical and effective way of obtaining this information in order to provide a comprehensive diagnosis and treatment program.

REFERENCES

Barkley, R.A. (1981) Hyperactive children: A Handbook for Diagnosis and Treatment. New York: Guilford Press.

Barkley, R.A. (1982) Specific guidelines for defining hyperactivity in children (attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity). In B.B. Laheya A. Kazdin (Eds), Advances in Clinical Child Psychology (Vol. 5, pp. 130-180). New York: Plenum Press.

Barkley, R.A. (1989) Attention-deficit Hyperactive Disorder. In E.d. Mash R.A. Barkley (Eds), Treatment of Childhood Disorders (pp. 39-72). New York: Guilford Press.

Connors, C.K. (1973). "Rating Scales for use in drug studies with children." Pharmacology Bulletin: Special issues, Pharmacotherapy with children, 24-84.

Goyette, C.H., Conners, C.K. and Ulrich, R.F. (1978). "Normative data for revised Conners Parent and Teacher Rating Scales." Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 6, 221-236.

Hughes, J.N. (1988), Cognitive Behavior Therapy with Children in Schools New York: Pergamon Press.

Magid K., and McKelvey, C.A. (1981) High Risk:Children without a Conscience, New York: Bantam.

McMahon, R.J. and Wells, K.C. (1989). Conduct disorders. In E.J. Mash and R.A. Barkley (Eds), Treament of Childhood Disorders (pp. 73-132). New York: Guilford Press.

Reynolds, W.M. (1984), "Depression in Children and Adolescents, Pharmacology, Evaluation and Treatment." School Psychology Review 13: 171-82.

Rutter, M., Tizard, J., and Whitmore, K., (1970) eds. Education, Health and Behavior, London: Longnaan.

REFERENCES (Cont'd)

Shaywitz, S.E., Shaywitz, B.A., Schnell, C., and Towle, V.R.(1988) "Concurrent and Predictive Validity on the Yale Children's Inventory: an instrument to assess children with attentional deficits and learning disabilities." Pediatrics, 81: 562-71.

Trites, R.L., Blovin, A.G., and Laprade, K. (1982) "Factor analysis of the Conners Teacher Rating Scale based upon a large normative sample." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 50, 615-623.

Wielkiewez, R.M., (1986), "Behavior Management in the Schools Principles and Procedures. New York: Pergamon Press, 1986.